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Newton Fire Caused by Smoking Materials

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan, Newton Fire Chief Joseph E. LaCroix and Newton Police Chief John J. O'Brien announced their joint investigation into the January 25, 2008 fatal fire at 33 Ashmont Street has determined that the most probable cause of the fire was improper use of smoking materials. Investigators determined that the fire started inside a living room closet and believe an ember from a pipe tucked inside a jacket pocket started the fire. The fire took the life of an elderly woman who lived in the duplex and injured her adult son who lived with her. In addition, three firefighters were injured, two seriously.

Coan said, "The improper use and disposal of smoking materials has been the leading cause of fatal fires since World War II according to available records. In 2006, 32% of home fire deaths were caused by smoking"

Chief LaCroix said, "The Newton firefighters fought hard to rescue the occupants and to save the woman's life. Our deepest sympathies go to her family and friends."

He added, "While working smoke alarms cannot guarantee escape, they can provide the one thing you don't have in a fire – time." Only one battery-operated smoke alarm was found in the basement of the building.

The fire was jointly investigated by members of the Newton Fire Department, Newton Police Department and state police assigned to the Office of the State Fire Marshal and to the Middlesex District Attorney's Office.

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